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The
Account
of
John Stockwell
of Deerfield, Massachusetts

Being a Faithful Narrative of His
Experiences in the Hands of the
Wachusett Indians --- 1677-1678



1678—1928



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Experiences in the Hands of the
Wachusett Indians --- 1677-1678



Somerville, New Jersey

To
C. E. Douglas
with the season's
greetings, Christmas, 1933
C. S. Yowell

Ninety copies printed
for Clark S. Yowell.

The narrative of the captivity of John Stockwell is of particular interest, first, because no complete copy of the first printing is known to exist. This account is taken from Richard Blome's "The Present State of His Majesties Isles and Territories in America" (1687). Very little material is available covering the continued depredations by the Indians between the time of the death of King Philip and the actual termination of what is known as King Philip's War, when, in April, 1678, Governor Andros concluded a treaty with the Eastern Indians at Casco. The detailed account of Stockwell's capture by the Wachusetts (a branch or family of the Nipmuks then living in what is now Worcester County, Massachusetts), the sufferings and privations endured on the march through the unexplored northern country, the aimless drifting about on Lake Champlain, and the treatment accorded the captive by the inhabitants of New France throws an interesting light on conditions during this interval two hundred and fifty years ago.



The Account of John Stockwell



ABOUT Sun-set,* I and another Man being together, the *Indians* with great shouting and shooting came upon us, and some other of the *English* hard by, at which we ran to a Swamp for refuge; which they perceived, made after us, and shot at us, three Guns being discharged upon me; the Swamp being mirie, I slipt in, and fell down; whereupon an *Indian* stept to me, with his Hatchet lifted up to knock me on the head, supposing I was wounded, and unfit for Travel: It happened I had a Pistol in my Pocket, which (though uncharged) I presented to him, who presently stept back, and told me, If I would yield I should have no hurt, boasting falsely, that they had destroyed all *Hatfield*, and that the Woods were full of *Indians*; whereupon I yielded myself, and fell into the Enemies Hands, and by three of them was led away to the place whence I first fled; where two other *Indians* came running to us, and one lifting up the But-end of his Gun to knock me on the head, the other with his hand put by the blow, and said I was his Friend. I was now near my own House, which the *Indians* burnt last year, and I was about to build up again, and there I had some hopes to escape from them; there was a Horse just by, which they bid me take; I did so, but at-

*September 19, 1677.

tempted no escape, because the Beast was dull and slow, and I thought they would send me to take my own Horses; which they did, but they were so frightened, that I could not come near them, and so fell again into the Enemies Hands, who now took me, bound me, and led me away. Soon after, I was brought to other Captives, who were that day taken at *Hatfield*, which moved two contrary Passions, Joy, to have Company; and Sorrow, that we were in that miserable Condition: We were all pinion'd and led away in the Night over the Mountains, in dark and hideous ways, about four Miles further, before we took up our place of rest, which was a dismal place of a Wood on the East-side of that Mountain; we were kept bound all that night, the Indians watching us, who, as they Travell'd, made strange noises, as of Wolves, Owls, and other Birds and Beasts, that they might not lose one another; and if followed, might not be discover'd by the *English*.

About break of day we marched again, and got over the great River *Pecomptuck*; there the *Indians* marched out upon Trays, the number of their Captives and Slain, as there manner is: Here I was again in great danger, a quarrel arising whose Captive I was, and I was afraid I must be killed to end the controversie; they then asked me whose Captive I was, I said three *Indians* took me; so they agreed to have all a share in me: I had now three Masters, but the Chief was he that first laid hands on me, which happened to be the worst of the company, as *Ashpelon* the *Indian* Captain told me, who was always very kind to me, and a great comfort to the *English*. In this place they gave us Victuals which they had brought away from the *English*, and ten Men were again

sent out for more Plunder, some of whom brought Provision, others Corn out of the Meadows, upon Horses; from hence we went up above the Falls, where we crost that River again, when I fell down-right Lame of my old Wounds received in the War; but the apprehension of my being killed by the *Indians*, and what cruel death they would put me to, soon frightened away my pain, and I was very brisk again. We had eleven Horses in that company, which carried Burthens and the Women; we travell'd up the River till night, and then took up our Lodgings in a dismal place, being laid on our Backs and staked down, in which posture we lay many nights together; the manner was, our arms and legs being stretched out, were staked fast down, and a Cord put about our necks, so that we could not possibly stir; the first night (being much tired) I slept as comfortably as ever; the next we lay in the *Saquahog*-Meadows; our Provisions was soon spent, and whilst we were there, the *Indians* went a Hunting, and the *English* Army came out after us. Then the *Indians* moved again, dividing themselves and the Captives into many companies, that the *English* might not follow their Track; at night, having crossed the River, we met again at the place appointed; the next day we re-passed it, where we continued a long time, which being about thirty Miles above *Squag*, the *Indians* were quite out of fear of the *English*, but much afraid of the *Mo-hawks*, another sort of *Indians*, Enemies to them.

In this place they built a strong *Wigwam*, and had a great Daunce, as they call'd it, where it was concluded to burn three of us; having provided Bark for that purpose, of whom (as I heard afterwards) I was to be one, Serjeant

Plumpton another, and the Wife of *Benjamin Wait* the third; I knew not then who they were, yet I understood so much of their Language, that I perceived some were designed thereto; that night I could not sleep for fear of the next day's work, the Indians (weary with dancing) lay down and slept soundly. The *English* were all loose, whereupon I went out for Wood, and mended the fire, making a noise on purpose, but none awaked; I thought if any of the *English* should wake, we might kill them all sleeping; to which end I removed out of the way all the Guns and Hatchets, but my heart failing, I put all things where they were again. The next day (when they intended to burn us) our Master and some others spoke for us, and the evil was prevented at this time: We lay here about three Weeks, where I had a Shirt brought me to make; one *Indian* said it should be made this way, another a different way, and a third this way, whereupon I told them I would make it according to my chief Master's order; upon this an *Indian* struck me on the face with his fist, I suddenly rose in anger to return it again, which raised a great Hubbub; the *Indians* and *English* coming about me. I was fain to humble my self to my Master, which ended the matter. Before I came to this place, my three Masters were gone a Hunting, and I was left with only one *Indian* (all the company being upon a march) who fell sick, so that I was fain to carry his Gun and Hatchet, whereby I had opportunity to have dispatched him, but did not, because the *English* Captives had engag'd the contrary to each other, since if one should run away, it would much endanger the remainder: Whilst we were here, *Benjamin Stebbins*, going with some *Indians* to *Wachuset* Hills, made his escape, the

tydings whereof caused us all to be called in and bound. One of the *Indians* Captains, and always our great Friend, met me coming in, and told me *Stebbins* was run away, and the *Indians* spoke of burning us; some were only for burning our fingers, and then biting them off; he said there would be a Court, and all would speak their minds, but he would speak last, and declare, That the *Indian*, who suffered *Stebbins* to make his escape, was only in fault; and bid us not fear any hurt should happen to us, and so it prov'd accordingly.

Whilst we lingered here-about, Provision grew scarce, one Bear's Foot must serve five of us a whole day; we began to eat Horse-flesh, and devoured several Horses, three only being left alive. At this time the *Indians* had fallen upon *Hadley*, where some of them being taken, were released, upon promise of meeting the *English* on such a Plain, to make further Terms: Captain *Ashpalon* was much for it, but the *Sachins* of *Wachuset*, when they came, were against it; yet were willing to meet the *English*, only to fall upon and destroy them. *Ashpalon* charged us *English* not to speak a word of this, since mischief would come of it. With these *Indians* from *Wachuset*, there came above fourscore *squaws*, or Women and Children, who reported the *English* had taken *Uncas* and all his Men, and sent them beyond the Seas; whereat they were much enraged, asking us if it were true; we deny'd it, which made *Ashpalon* angry, saying he would no more believe *Englishmen*. They then examin'd every one apart, and dealt worse with us for a time, than before; still Provision was scarce; at length we came to a place called *Squaro-Maug-River*, where we hoped to find Salmon, but came too late; this place I reckon two hundred miles above

Deer-field, then we parted into two companies, some went one way, and some another; we passed over a mighty Mountain, being eight days in travelling of it, though we marched very hard, and had every day either Snow or Rain; we observed that on this Mountain all the Water ran Northward. Here we likewise wanted Provision, at length we got over and came near a Lake, where we staid a great while to make *Canoes*, wherein to pass over. Here I was frozen, and here again we were like to starve; all the *Indians* went a Hunting, but could get nothing several days; they *Pawawed*, or Conjured, but to no purpose; then they desired the *English* to pray, confessing they could do nothing, and would have us try what the *Englishmans* God could do: I prayed, so did Sergeant *Plumpton* in another place, the *Indians* reverently attending Morning and Night; next day they killed some Bears, then they would needs make us desire a Blessing, and return Thanks at Meals; but after a while they grew weary of it, and the *Sachim* forbid us; when I was frozen, they were very cruel to me, because I could not do as at other times.

When we came to the Lake, we were again sadly straightened for Provision, and forced to eat Touch-wood fried in Bear's Grease; at last we found a company of *Racoons*, and then we made a Feast, the Custom being that we must eat all; I perceived I had too much for one time, which an *Indian* that sate by observing, bid me to slip away some to him under his Coat, and he would hide it for me till another time; this *Indian*, as soon as he had got my meat, stood up and made a Speech to the rest, discovering what I had done, whereat they were very angry, and cut me another piece, forcing me to drink *Racoons* Grease, which made me

sick and vomit; I told them I had enough, after which they would give me no more, but still told me I had *Racoon* enough, whereby I suffered much, and (being frozen) was in great pain, sleeping but little, and yet must do my task that was set me; as they came to the Lake, they killed a great *Moose*, staying there till it was all eaten, and then entered upon the Lake; a Storm arose, which endangered us all, but at last we got to an Island, and there the *Indians* went to *Pawawing*, or Conjuring; the *Pawaw* declared, that *Benjamin Wait* and another were coming, and that Storm was raised to cast them away: This afterwards appeared to be true, though then I believed it not; upon this Island we lay still several days, and then set out again, but a Storm took us, so that we continued to and fro upon certain Islands about three weeks; we had no Provisions but *Racoons*, that the *Indians* themselves were afraid of being starved; they would give me nothing, whereby I was several days without any Victuals: At length we went upon the Lake on the Ice, having a little Slead, upon which we drew our Loads; before Noon I tired, and just then the *Indians* met with some *Frenchmen*: One of the *Indians*, who took me, came and called me all manner of ill Names, throwing me on my back; I told him I could do no more, then he said he must kill me, which I thought he was about to do, for pulling out his knife, he cut off my Pockets and wrapt them about my Face, and then he helped me up, and took my Slead and went away, giving me a bit of Bisket like a *Walnut*, which he had of the *Frenchman*, and told me he would give me a Pipe of *Tobacco*; when my Slead was gone, I ran after him, (but being tired soon fell to a footpace, whereby the *Indians* were out of sight; I followed as

well as I could, having many falls upon the Ice; at length I was so spent, I had not strength enough to rise again, but crept to a Tree that lay along, upon which I continued all the cold night, it being very sharp weather.

I now counted no other but I must here die, which whilst I was ruminating of, an *Indian* hollowed, and I answered; he came to me and called me bad Names, telling me if I would not go he must knock me on the head; I told him he must then do so, he saw how I wallowed in the Snow, but could not rise; hereupon he wrapt me in his Coat, and going back, sent two *Indians* with a Slead; one said he must knock me on the head, the other said no, they would carry me away and burn me; then they bid me stir my Instep, to see if that were frozen, I did so; when they saw that, they said there was a Chirurgeon with the *French* that could cure me; then they took me upon a Slead and carried me to the fire, making much of me, pulling of my wet, and wrapping me in dry coaths, laying me on a good Bed; they had killed an *Otter*, and gave me some of the Broth, and a bit of the Flesh; here I slept till towards day, and was then able to get up and put on my Cloaths; one of the *Indians* awaked, and seeing me go, shouted, as rejoycing at it. As soon as it was light, I and *Samuel Russel* went afore on the Ice upon a River, they said I must go on foot as much as I could for fear of freezing; *Russel* slipt into the River with one foot, the *Indians* called him back and dried his Stockins, and sent us away with an *Indian* Guide; we went four or five Miles before the rest of the *Indians* overtook us; I was pretty well spent, *Russel* said he was faint, and wondred how I could live, for he said he had had ten Meals to my one; I was then laid on the Slead, and they ran away with me on the ice; the rest and *Russel*

came shortly after, whose face I never after saw more, nor knew what become of him. About midnight we got near *Shamblee*, a *French* Town, where the River was open; when I came to travel, I was not able, whereupon an *Indian* who staid with me would carry me a few Rods, and then I would go as many, telling me I would die if he did not carry me, and I must tell the English how kind he was.

When we came to the first house, there was no Inhabitants; the *Indian* and I were both spent and discouraged, he said we must now both die; at last he left me alone, and got to another house, from whence came some *French* and *Indians*, who brought me in; the *French* were very kind, putting my hands and feet in cold Water, and gave me a dram of Brandy, and a little Hasty-Pudding and Milk; when I tasted Victuals, I was very hungry, but they would not suffer me to eat too much; I lay by the fire with the *Indians* that night, yet could not sleep for pain; next morning the *Indians* and *French* fell out about me, the *Indians* saying, that the *French* loved the *English* better than the *Indians*: The *French* presently turned the *Indians* out of doors, being very careful of me, and all the Men in the Town came to see me: Here I continued three or four days, and was invited from one house to another, receiving much civility from a young Man, who let me lie in his Bed, and would have bought me, but the *Indians* demanded a hundred Pounds; we travell'd to a place called *Surril*, whither this young Man accompanied me to prevent my being abused by the *Indians*; he carried me on the Ice one day's Journey, for now I could not go at all; when we came to the place, the People were kind.

Next day, being in much pain, I asked the *Indians* to carry me to the Chirurgeon, as they had promised; whereat

they were angry, one taking up his Gun to knock me down, but the French would not suffer it, falling upon them and kicking them out of doors; we went away from thence to a place two or three Miles off, where the *Indians* had *Wigwams*; some of them knew me, and seemed to pity me: While I was here, which was three or four days; the *French* came to see me, and (it being *Christmas* time) they brought me Cakes and other Provisions; the *Indians* tried to cure me, but could not; then I asked for the Chirurgeon, at which one of them in anger struck me on the face with his fist; a *Frenchman* being by, who spoke to him some words, and went his ways; soon after came the Captain of the place to the *Wigwam*, with about twelve armed Men, and asked where the *Indian* was that struck the *Englishman*, and seizing him, told him, he should go to the *Bilboes*, and then be hanged: The *Indians* were much terrified at this, as appeared by their countenance and trembling; I would have gone far away too, but the *Frenchman* bid me not fear, the *Indians* durst not hurt me.

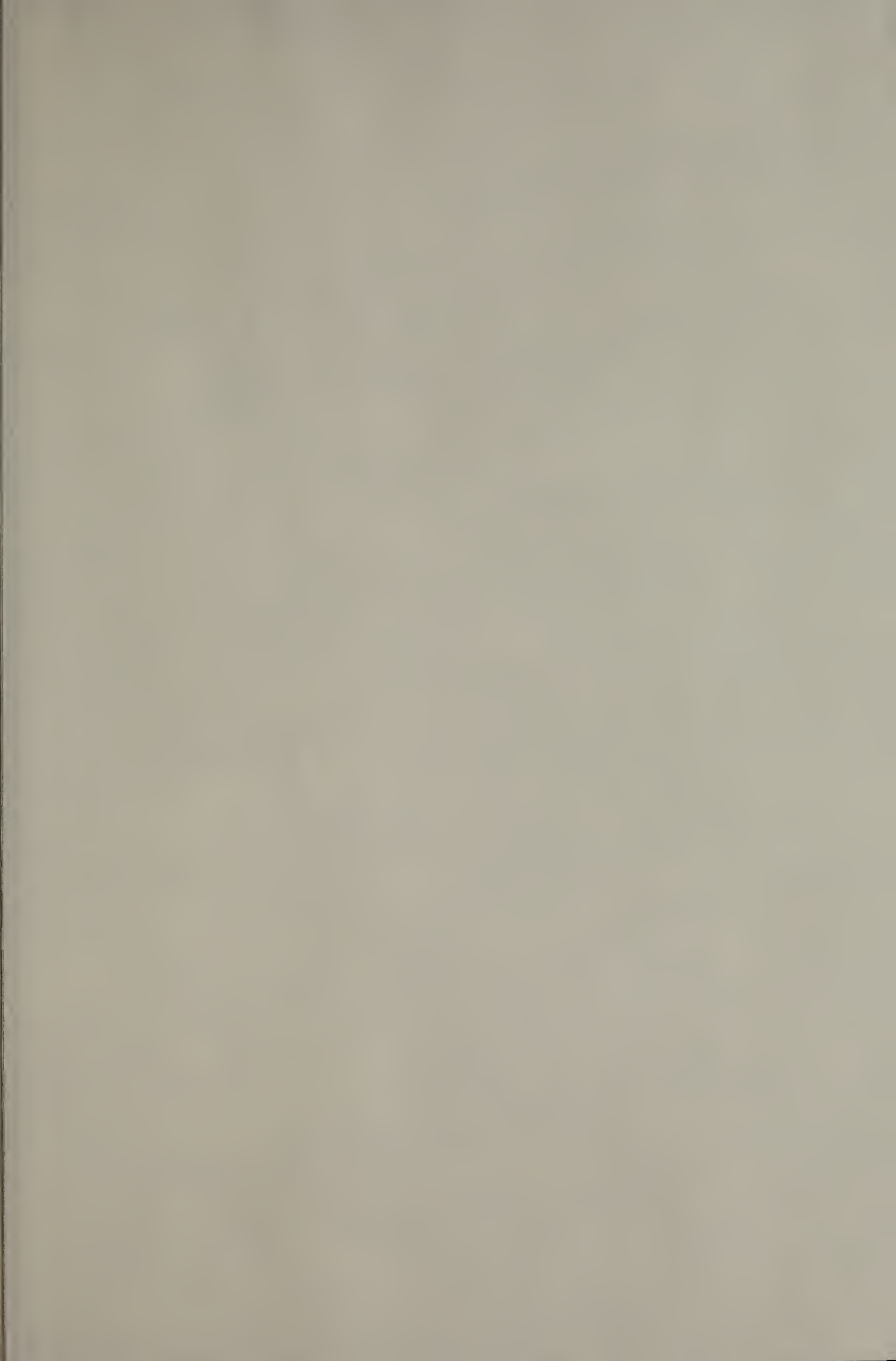
When that *Indian* was gone, I had two Masters still, I asked them to carry me to that Captain, that I might speak in behalf of the *Indian*; they answered, I was a Fool, did I think the *Frenchmen* were like the *English*, to say one thing and do another? they were Men of their Words; but at length I prevailed with them to help me thither, and speaking to the Captain by an Interpreter, told him, I desired him to set the *Indian* free, declaring how kind he had been to me; he replied, he was a Rouge, and should be hanged; then I privately alledged, that if he were hanged, it might fare the worse with the *English* captives; the Captain said, that ought

to be consider'd, whereupon he set him at liberty, upon condition he should never strike me more, and bring me every day to his house to eat victuals; I perceived the common People did not approve of what the *Indians* acted against the *English*: When he was free, he came and took me about the middle, saying, I was his Brother, I had saved his life once, and he had saved mine (he said) thrice; he then called for Brandy, and made me drink, and had me away to the *Wigwam* again; when I came there, the *Indians* one after another shook hands with me, and were very kind, thinking no other but I had saved the *Indian's* life.

Next day he carried me to the Captain's house, and set me down; they gave me my Victuals and Wine, and being left there awhile by the *Indians*, I shewed the Captain and his Wife my Fingers, who were affrighted thereat, and bid me lap it up again, and sent for the Chirurgeon, who when he came, said, he would cure me, and dressed it: That night I was full of pain, the *French* were afraid I would die, five Men did watch me, and strove to keep me cheerful for I was sometimes ready to faint; oft-times they gave me a little Brandy.

The next day the Chirurgeon came again and dressed me, and so he did all the while I was among the *French*, which was from *Christmas* till *May*. I continued in this Captain's House till *Benjamin Wait* came, and my *Indian* master (being in want of Money) pawned me to the Captain for fourteen *Beavers*, or the worth of them, by such a day; which if he did not pay, he must lose his Pawn, or else sell me for one and twenty *Beavers*; but he could get no *Beaver*, so I was sold, and (in God's good time) set at liberty, and returned to my Friends in *New-England* again.







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